

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

BALANCING U.S. STRATEGY IN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

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U.S. strategy to address support to developing countries is varied. In Colombia, U.S. strategy is an enabling force, allowing the Colombian government to continue solid progress towards sovereign control, while obtaining greater legitimacy of its government. This paper reviews the application of U.S. ends, ways and means to assist Colombia in its efforts to reverse a historical trend of violence. U.S. diplomatic, economic and military efforts are examined and analysis made on the success of current U.S. strategy. Negative perceptions of this strategy are addressed and recommendations for future strategy are made. Colombia continues to expand effective governance within its borders, while simultaneously improving human rights violations conditions. U.S. policy, coupled with unwavering support, will help determine if Colombia is able to fully obtain effective governance within its borders, free of human rights violations, illegal leftist and rightist organizations, and an economy based on narcotics production. The tide is turning in Colombia; now is the time to examine the balance of U.S. strategy in Colombia to enable maximum results.

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BALANCING U.S. STRATEGY IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, we recognize the link between terrorist and extremist groups that challenge the security of the state and drug trafficking activities that help finance the operations of such groups. We are working to help Colombia defend its democratic institutions and defeat illegal armed groups of both the left and right by extending effective sovereignty over the entire national territory and to provide basic security to the Colombian people.¹

- President George W. Bush
NSS, 2002

BACKGROUND

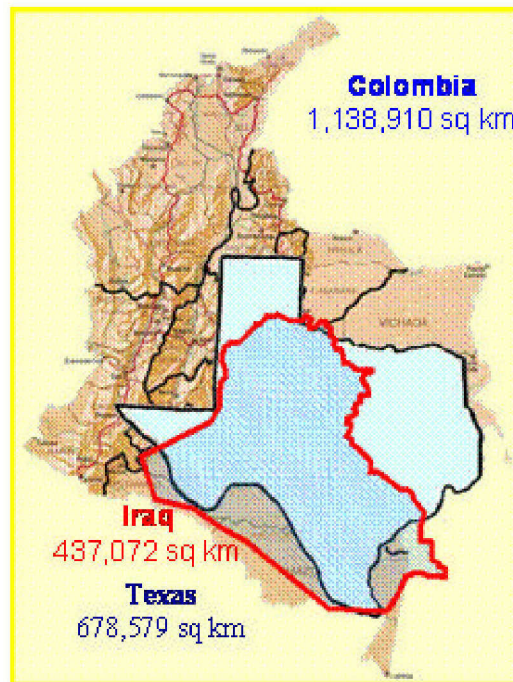
The success of United States foreign policy in Latin America is largely contingent upon Colombia's ability to gain and maintain sovereign control of its borders. The inability to provide governance to the area and the population within its borders poses a threat to stability in Latin America and the Western Hemisphere. Illegal drug trade and terrorist activities continue to disrupt the Colombian landscape, affecting not only its ability to provide security and prosperity to its citizens but also the well-being of other nations around the world. Progressive steps towards effective governance in recent years suggest to some that Colombia has indeed turned the corner on its internal problems, and that potential exists. However, Colombia is still far from achieving anything close to requisite control. U.S. involvement has grown over the past ten years, and the present administration has become more vocal in publicly stating its objectives for Colombia. This has created programs and provided support to the Colombian Government, operating on the belief that its success is our success.

The following analysis will utilize the ends, ways, and means approach to address U.S. strategy in Colombia. This method posits that strategy equals ends plus ways plus means. Ends are defined as national objectives, ways are methods or courses of action to achieve ends, and means are the resources (manpower, materiel, money, forces, logistics, etc.) utilized to execute ways or the courses of action.

This paper will also analyze the results of PLAN COLOMBIA and its subsequent manifestations - the Andean Ridge Initiative and Andean Counter-drug Initiative. There are many who contend the plan is on track garnering many successes towards combating narco-terrorism. There also those who believe the plan is not working towards stated objectives and that further militarization of the plan by the U.S. and Colombian governments is a mistake. Based on opposing views and reported results I will conclude with a recommendation for future U.S. strategy in Colombia.

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Before reviewing U.S. ends, ways and means in Colombia, it is important to understand contributing compositional geographical and demographic attributes of the country. Colombia



provides a very diverse geography to a diverse population. The Republic of Colombia is commonly referred to as the “gateway to Latin America.” It is located on the northern coast of South America and is closer to Miami than Miami is to New York. Its size is comparable to that of Texas and California combined, with a land mass of 1,138,910 square kilometers. The Andes Mountains run north to south. The Amazon tropical forest stretches to the east, and the fertile plains lay to the west. The capital city is Bogotá. Colombia is the only South American country bordered by both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The other borders include those with Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Panama and Venezuela.²

FIGURE 1.

Demographically, Colombia has the third largest population in Latin America, approximately forty-two million citizens. Ninety-five percent of the population is between fifteen and sixty-four years of age, with the average life expectancy seventy-one. The population lives in mostly rural areas with only thirty percent living outside of the ten largest cities. The majority of these cities are located on the coastal plains west of the Andes. Twenty-four percent of the population is indigenous, the official language is Spanish and the predominant religion, Roman Catholicism.

Even with its problems, Colombia's economy is one of the strongest in Latin America. It has two leading exports, oil and coffee, although both are declining in terms of volume. President Uribe's economic and security strategies have provided the impetus for internal and external encouragement and growth. As evidence, Colombia has never defaulted on international loans, and it continues to be the fifth largest provider of U.S. oil imports.

Though thirty percent of the country's population works in the agricultural sector, this accounts for less than fifteen percent of the GDP. The bottom ten percent of wage earners account for only one percent of the nation's wealth, while the top ten percent accounts for almost fifty percent of the wealth. This leaves fifty-five percent of Colombia's citizens below the poverty line.

Colombia's republican form of government sees peaceful changes to its administration every four years through democratic elections. However, the government is not without its challenges, which include the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The FARC and ELN are leftist guerilla groups, while the AUC is an outlawed anti-guerilla paramilitary force.

ANALYSIS

U.S. OBJECTIVES

National objectives, or ends, typically reflect U.S. national values. The primary national values that relate to Colombia include establishment of human rights, abolishment of the drug trade, and security for all people. Current U. S. policy in Colombia has a common thread of objectives that are representative of these values. The National Security Strategy addresses the need to provide developmental assistance to countries making progress in justly governing their populations and controlling sovereign spaces.³ The NSS addresses Colombia by name and acknowledges the need to support the defense of its democratic institutions from illegal armed groups and its fight against illegal drug activities.⁴ The National Military Strategy states a need to stabilize struggling democracies, which includes Latin America. The strategy lays out four objectives, two that pertain to Colombia: "...establish security conditions conducive to favorable international order and strengthen alliances and partnerships to contend with common challenges."⁵

There are several objectives in the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism that impact Colombia, but the FARC is addressed specifically because of its illegal drug trafficking and because the FARC, ELN, and AUC are designated foreign terrorist organizations by our government.⁶ Finally, the last objective listed in the National Drug Control Strategy, "Disrupting the Market: Attacking the Economic Basis of the Drug Trade,"⁷ recognizes the need to address the link between those who supply the drugs and those who use them by simultaneously working to decrease the demand. This objective includes interdicting drug flow in Colombia⁸ which affects the devastating effects caused by the drug trade.

It is critical that Colombia's democratic government be successful because otherwise less stable democratic governments in Central and South America could be negatively impacted if terrorists or guerrilla factions in Colombia cause the collapse of the current government. A faltering democracy in Colombia might indicate to others that weak democratic methods are not capable of governing in Latin America. The Colombian President, Alvaro Uribe, is working with the U.S. and others to provide increased security in populated areas, and is executing a "seize and hold"⁹ strategy as the government takes control of previously ungoverned areas. This increased control has resulted in popular confidence in governmental actions, allowing President Uribe's government to enjoy an over 70% approval rating in Colombia.

Key to the continued Uribe administration's success is improved human rights. Guerrillas, as well as military and police forces in Colombia, have been major violators of human rights. These human rights violations result in loss of both credibility and trust in the government. The citizens of Colombia, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working to improve conditions in Colombia, continue to be victims of these violations. The inability of the government to provide protection for its citizens and the rule of law within its borders causes distrust of its citizens and discourages NGOs and others from operating there. The impact of the guerrilla organizations must cease, while simultaneously reducing the corruption and frequency of human rights violations committed by the military and police forces. Both are needed in order to instill the trust and respect required for governance.

Currently, Colombia is responsible for over 90% of cocaine production in the world and a growing percentage of heroin.¹⁰ These on-going drug activities form the basis for many of the internal problems the government combats daily. The narcotics traffickers often have systems more elaborate than the government's. They capably recruit and train their security forces enabling sustained operations. They employ an established chain of command, many with leaders with seniority dating back many years. These organizations have the ability to compartmentalize their communications, preventing the government from penetrating their operations. Additionally, they ruthlessly vet their members to ensure loyalty to the cause. In order to support and safeguard these activities, the drug traffickers have developed a secret and highly organized system of operations, marked by violence and capitalizing on governmental corruption.

To ensure operations without interference, local police, judges, military commanders, and senior government officials are paid bribes to not interfere. Costs to those who do not comply often entails death for them and their families. The result is corrupt officials who ensure safe havens for the drug traffickers and who provide the financial resources for terrorist and guerrilla

organizations in Colombia. These groups conduct major operations in many ungoverned areas in Colombia, forcibly controlling much of the population and using violence to induce loyalty in the absence of government-provided security. This corruption and associated violence force the Colombian government to focus resources to combat these activities, instead of concentrating on developing the country's infrastructure.

The absence of other economic activity creates the basis for much of the narcotics production. In order to survive, farmers need to produce a product that sustains their needs. While coffee is still a major export of Colombia, its attractiveness to farmers decreases as market prices decrease.¹¹ More lucrative alternative crops could be grown, but many are perishable products that require quick access to markets for immediate sale. The absence of infrastructure, coupled with rough terrain, prohibits expeditious movement to market. Thus the resulting lack of perceived alternative crops only encourages illegal organizations by reinforcing farmers' need to grow coca. Foreign investment is needed to improve the infrastructure and create alternative means of employment that will result in economic development for the citizens of Colombia.

In addition to the illicit drug trade, Colombia is the kidnapping and homicide capital of the world, with approximately 2,200 kidnappings reported in 2003.¹² Often hostages are violently abducted with the perpetrators using military raid techniques. This often leaves many innocent citizens dead in the wake. Hostages include political figures, policemen, members of wealthy families, and personnel working with companies or NGOs from other countries. Frequently, the hostages are executed when ransoms are not produced, dictated prisoner trades are not agreed to, or rescue attempts are suspected. The frequency and ruthlessness of these abductions discourage external support and threatens Colombian democracy.

U.S. PROGRAMS

U.S. programs or "ways" synergistically apply all of the major instruments of power. However, this discussion will focus on the use of diplomatic, military, and economic programs. Diplomatically, the U.S. recognizes the Colombian government in international fora and signals support through the use of senior leader speeches, related policies, and other strategic communications. Because Colombia's history is marred with events indicating a substantial loss of governmental control, many proclaim it a failed state. However, since 2002, Colombia's substantial progress in meeting stated objectives has resulted in the U.S. showing greater diplomatic support.

Economically the U.S. provides aid to Colombian development in numerous ways, but the primary means of support is through foreign trade and assistance policies. The trade policies in the Colombia and the Andean regions include trade promotion, trade alliances with the U.S., and economic development packages such as those overseen by USAID. Though the country is rich in natural resources, it has only recently made sufficient economic progress for others to believe that Colombia can overcome the negative impacts of insurgent groups and illegal narcotic operations. Without reinforcing these improved perceptions, obtaining necessary foreign investment is difficult.

Still another area of support is through military assistance to Colombia. This includes providing personnel, training, equipment, intelligence support, and military-to-military coordination. Currently, Colombia is the third largest recipient of U.S. military assistance, having received almost three billion dollars since Plan Colombia's inception. This type of assistance focuses on aiding Colombia in its counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency efforts in order to establish governance in formerly ungoverned areas. The country's inability to provide governance within its borders denies security to the populace, threatens economic development, and causes bordering nations concern.

U.S. SUPPORT

Diplomatic

Increasingly, diplomatic efforts are evidenced in speeches by the President, diplomats at all levels, and by U.S. military commanders in the region. Their common intent during such speeches is to convey full support and appreciation for Colombia's progress in meeting expected standards in governing its sovereign territory and to ensure continued support.

On 17 June 2004, Roger Noriega, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs spoke on U.S. policy and programs in Colombia. Noriega listed five U.S. objectives: "... (1) support Colombian efforts to strengthen and defend its democratic institutions, (2) promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, (3) intensify counter-narcotics efforts, (4) foster economic development and investment, (5) address immediate humanitarian needs, ending the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism."¹³ Assistant Secretary Noriega's reinforcement of U.S. objectives in the region serves to raise awareness and demonstrate support to the Colombian government.

After attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Chile in November 2004, President Bush stopped in Cartagena. During this stop, he praised President Uribe for his work in improving human rights conditions and for his efforts against illegal activities such as murder,

kidnapping, and illegal narcotics trade operations. President Bush pledged, "My nation will continue to help Colombia prevail in this vital struggle."¹⁴

A more recent public announcement of support came during Condoleezza Rice's Secretary of State confirmation hearings. In response to a question regarding her stance regarding Colombia, she credited President Uribe for making great progress towards improved governance of his country and said, "I would like to – we would like to be in a position to do whatever we need to do to help him [Uribe] and to have him tell us what that is."¹⁵

Diplomatic efforts like these clearly demonstrate the solidarity between the U.S. and Colombia, and they send a strong signal that the U.S. will assist such partners with establishment of governance of their countries, improved health and education for their populace, and continued sound development of economic policies that foster free trade and individual initiative. These pronouncements show other nations that assistance may be forthcoming, if and when positive objectives are established. They also demonstrate to Colombians that President Uribe's government has American support and will receive necessary resources to continue the ongoing strengthening of democracy in Colombia.

Economic

U.S. economic aid to Colombia is distributed through several programs such as the Millennium Challenge Account, the Andean Counter-drug Initiative (ACI), and the Andean Trade Agreement (ATA). These programs require signatory countries to improve just governance of their sovereignties, to be measured by metrics outlined in U.S. objectives. ACI's focus is disruption of cultivation and exportation operations in the Andean region in order to reduce the amount of illegal drugs entering the U.S.¹⁶ The intent of the ATA is to provide greater hope by enhancing democratic and socioeconomic development in countries through economic enabling programs.¹⁷

Much of the economic aid is tied to negotiations of the Free Trade Area of Americas (FTAA). These negotiations address policies that enhance trade in Colombia. Further, tariff reductions on imports have encouraged investment by other nations, and supporting policies that require political will to export expansion enable growth of production within the country. While previous policies prevented foreign production within the country, these new initiatives allow joint ventures with Colombian firms. In some cases one-hundred percent foreign ownership further enhances foreign investment. Additionally, redirected export subsidies encourage greater incentives for employment generation and investment in developing technologies. Colombia has increased economic reform by decreasing copyright, patent and

trademark infractions. Although many of these advances have been made by the Colombian government, most have been encouraged by U.S. requirements to qualify for additional economic aid.

Colombian economic progress can be seen in many indicators as provided by the U.S. Embassy in Colombia, many attributable to aid provided by current U.S. programs coupled with strong Colombian leadership. The economic and social progress reflected in the chart below allows President Uribe to enjoy continued strong approval ratings. Approximately 1.2 million jobs were added since 2002, with the growth in GDP. Approximately 5.9 million more people receive health care coverage, with 1.2 million more kids in school and 32% fewer displaced persons.

COLOMBIA'S PROGRESS: ECONOMY AND SOCIAL ISSUES					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
GDP		1.40%	1.8%	4.0%	3.9%
Beneficiaries of health care	9.5m	11.0m	10.7m	11.8m	15.4m
Public School Enrollment	7.4m	7.2m	7.8m	8.3m	8.6m
Alternative crops planted under Plan Colombia (hectares)		1500	15,742	43,951	60,088
Newly Displaced Persons	339,848	373,531	422,750	219,423	137,315

TABLE 1.

Military

Plan Colombia was initially released in 2000 by President Pastrana and continues as the cornerstone for President Uribe's internal policy. Plan Colombia is a six year plan to combat illegal drug trade and to seek resolutions with the three warring factions in Colombia: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC).¹⁸ The objectives of this six year, three phase plan included: support for human rights and judicial reform, expansion of counter-narcotics operations into southern Colombia, alternative economic development, increased interdiction, and assistance for the Colombian National Police. Phase one was completed in 2002 and focused on disrupting production in two of the primary cocaine producing regions, while at the same time improving military and police capabilities through receipt of equipment and training from the U.S. Phase two focused on increasing the size of armed forces, beginning cross-border coordination and a concentrated re-establishment of forests where coca cultivation prospered. Phase three's focus is on providing Colombian presence into municipalities and sovereign areas with no governmental presence in order to increase security and stability in these regions. The plan calls for \$7.5 billion in U.S. dollars, of which Colombia was providing \$4

billion and expecting another \$3.5 billion from the international community. The U.S. initially pledged \$1.3 billion in support of this plan.¹⁹

The number of U.S. personnel resourced in Colombia to support the policies recently increased from 400 to 800 military personnel and from 400 to 600 contractors. These increases recognized a shift in U.S. policy solely focused on counter-drug operations to one of counter-narcotics and terrorism, allowing the engagement of terrorists. These personnel are key enablers to the government in all factions of its Plan Colombia execution. However, a key constraint is that they are not permitted to engage in combat operations with Colombian units.²⁰ Though this constraining factor reduces the speed of progress, it significantly reduces the chances of U.S. soldiers being killed or kidnapped in the execution of duties, reducing the likelihood of future congressional support.

Primary services provided by U.S. personnel include planning assistance to the Colombian Army and counter-narcotics brigade headquarters. This technical expertise is essential in planning operations that combat counter-narcoterrorism, as Colombia continues to expand its presence into ungoverned municipalities. Although the importance of this planning assistance will diminish as more Colombian military officers are trained in the U.S. and Colombia, this is still a vital long-term requirement.

Additionally, U.S. personnel also provide training to Colombian troops to deter narcotics trafficking and reduce human rights violations. Police forces are being trained to detect and disrupt narcotics labs. Anti-kidnapping units are trained to identify and disrupt potential kidnappings and increasing skill in hostage rescue, in the event prevention fails. A trained counter-narcotics brigade is working to augment other programs to find and destroy poppy and coca crops, while combating guerrilla forces protecting them. Colombian special operations forces are being trained to identify and attack high value targets associated with terrorist or illegal activities. Other units are being trained to provide protection to critical infrastructure such as the oil pipeline in Colombia.²¹ In addition, U.S. personnel are assisting the Colombian government in the vetting of units to ensure that they are not violating human rights in the process of conducting operations, thereby increasing trust and confidence of the citizens.

Major items of U.S. military equipment include approximately sixty Blackhawk and Huey II aircraft to various organizations and are requisite to the government's success in moving beyond the central highlands and over the rugged Andean mountain ranges to provide presence and support into areas once ungoverned. The aircraft allow movement to border regions where military-to-military coordination, facilitated by the U.S., is increasing with border

countries such as Peru and Ecuador. Critical intelligence collection by airborne platforms is also provided by other military aircraft to assist counter-drug and insurgency efforts.²²

BALANCE OF ENDS, WAYS AND MEANS

Objectives in the region have shifted from counter-narcotics to counter-terrorist efforts, while understanding that counter-insurgency operations underpin the success of the first two. Both President Uribe and President Bush have increasingly militarized the methods of accomplishing stated objectives with results such as those accomplishments listed below.

During the March 2, 2004 testimony before the House Government Reform Committee on Criminal Justice on given by Robert Charles, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, he reported significant Colombian achievements for the year 2003, most significant being the establishing of governmental police presence in 157 municipalities that were without governance in years past.²³ The table below highlights a few of the significant improvements accomplished by Colombian police and military forces in 2004. Significant improvements are the addition of over 111,000 soldiers and policeman that have contributed to greater security for the citizens they serve.

COLOMBIA'S PROGRESS: POLICE AND MILITARY ISSUES					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Military and Police	237,813	250,776	295,816	339,185	349,119
Coca Crops (hectares)	136,900	169,800	144,450	113,850	
AUC Killed & Demobilized	92	117	187	2,080	4,451
Guerillas Killed & Demobilized	1,290	1,356	3,102	3,765	3,663
Homicides	26,528	27,840	28,837	23,509	20,012
Kidnappings (extortive)	1,995	1,720	1,883	1,468	746
Incidents of Terrorism	1,549	1,172	1,645	1,257	709

TABLE 2

The positive movement towards common goals given by Charles indicates that U.S. aid to Colombian programs is producing significant results, but not enough. The preceding figures show progress as a percent of change from previous year statistics; however, the actual numbers demonstrate that horrific violations are still occurring.

An interview with a Colombian Army officer indicates that the combined resources of the Colombian and U.S. Governments are successfully executing a long term plan to achieve Plan Colombia objectives. Militarily, Colombia is winning with the additional resources supplied to Plan Colombia. He emphasizes, however, that progress being made in the judicial and social reforms being enabled by this operation are just as significant. He cautions, however, that the problem Colombia faces is a very complex one, and that economic development and future drug

demand created by the U.S. and Europe will play significant roles in the overall success of Plan Colombia.²⁴

EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS

In 2002, Julia Sweig published an article entitled "What Kind of War for Colombia?"²⁵. The article provides an assessment of current U.S. policies in Colombia, and is a sound representation of many publications on this topic that were published prior to 2003. In the article, she makes numerous suggestions or comments. One suggestion is that the pre-requisites for receiving U.S. aid were not being met by Colombia, but yet the aid continues. One such requirement was for the Colombian military to break all ties with paramilitaries in order to receive aid. However, she indicates that documentation proves that some senior military officers were still communicating with the paramilitaries and human rights violations still occurred at the hands of military forces receiving aid. Additionally, fumigation of poppy and coca crops caused displacement of large populations who could no longer cultivate crops. This adversely affects the health of citizens and heightens their reliance on illegal organizations for employment. Finally, she countered that the U.S. increasingly outlines objectives and new programs without providing additional funds to execute these programs.

Many pre-2003 articles presented the common theme that human rights violations are still occurring. The primary objection was that the documented violations were often committed by the Colombian military and police forces. Because aid was going directly to many of the accused violators, it was implied that U.S. aid was responsible for on-going human rights violations in Colombia. Additionally, these organizations objected to the failure of Colombia to meet goals to reduce the number of guerillas and paramilitaries. Compounding this objection was the assertion that U.S. aid was being used to support these illegal organizations.

Publications since 2003 appear to focus now on the secondary effects of progress towards stated objectives, the key topic being the demobilization of the illegal leftist and rightist organizations. As President Uribe is getting these organizations to the negotiation table and many are demobilizing or preparing to do so, the controversy surrounds the proposed lack of accountability applied to past violations by the individual members. It is perceived that the guerillas and paramilitaries are being allowed to demobilize forces from the field without being held accountable for crimes committed in the past.

The Center for International Policy (CIP) warns that trends in U.S. policy continue to blur the lines between civilian and military roles.²⁶ Evidence of this is shown by the fact that the number of military troops trained by the U.S. doubled from 2002 to 2003, and account for

approximately 50% of all Latin American soldiers trained. Most of these soldiers were funded through counter-narcotics programs and can legally be used for counter-insurgency operations. Those in favor of Plan Colombia would argue that these additional soldiers provided much needed assets to the government for its efforts to reclaim ungoverned spaces. CIP argues the increase in military missions inside of Colombia's borders further exacerbates the wrongful missioning of the military to accomplish civilian police responsibilities, possibly politicizing military forces and destabilizing democratic functions in the future. To compound this problem, U.S. Special Forces are providing light infantry tactics training to the civilian police forces, possibly encouraging methods that could be considered by many as overly militaristic and not respectful of the democratic freedoms that they are there to protect.

CIP suggests that the primary cause for this militarization of forces is the result of the Pentagon and SOUTHCOM driving policy development, rather than the State Department.²⁷ Further contention suggests that the Executive Branch is currently focused on the Middle East and relegating guidance development to the Pentagon, when the State Department is responsible for foreign relations policies. A possible reason given is that since September 11, 2001, U.S. concerns in Colombia have seen a shift from counter-narcotics to counter-terrorism. However, very little of the training appears to be focused on combating Al Qaeda - related threats.

Strategies to combat illegal organizations range from the most conservative, that favor complete military dominance, to the most liberal that demand a greater focus on human rights. However, two significant contributing factors to the illegal operations in ungoverned areas must be addressed with greater urgency if objectives are to be achieved. The first contributing factor, poverty, is seen by many Latin Americans as the greatest threat to their security. As long as the economy does not support the populace with jobs and an opportunity to prosper, those offering employment in narcotics production will continue to have a plentiful employment base. With greater than 50% of all Colombians living below the poverty line and insufficient funding to impact economic development, there appears to be little recourse for those forced to support narcotics cultivation.

The second contributing factor is the cocaine and heroin demand generated by the North American and European continents. The unsuccessful attempt by governments in these areas to combat drug use at home ensures a profitable recourse for those without alternative means. Significant progress in reducing demand would be evident by accompanying reduction in street prices for the drugs. If high demand nations could cause a reduction in street value by

diminishing demand, it would cease to be profitable for those producing the drugs, forcing them to pursue other economic means.

Aid associated with Plan Colombia does not adequately address the two factors above. Since the Plan's inception in 2000 the U.S. has provided an average of \$677 million USD per year, with only 18% or \$134 million USD being applied to the Andean Counter-Drug Initiative for State Department controlled development projects; the remaining 82% supporting military or police development operations. The table below suggests that the U.S. policy does not consider economic development as a key enabler to stated objectives in Colombia.

Police and Military Assistance Programs (millions of dollars)										
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005, estimate	2006, requested
International Narcotics Control (INC, also known as "Andean Counterdrug Initiative")	33.5	56.5	200.1	688.1	46.4	254.2	431	324.6	321.8	331.9
Foreign Military Financing (FMF)	30	0	0.4	0	4.5	0	17.1	98.5	99.2	90
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	0	0.9	0.9	0.9	1	1.2	1.2	1.7	1.7	1.7
Emergency Drawdowns	14.2	41.1	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
"Section 1004"	10.3	11.8	35.9	68.7	190.2	119.1	165	122	200	167
"Section 1033"										
Authority to use the defense budget for some types of counter-drug aid	0	2.2	13.5	7.2						
Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA)	0	0	0	0	25	3.3	0	3.9	2	2
Excess Defense Articles (EDA)	0.1	0	0	0.4	0.5	2.4	3.4	2.9	2.9	2.9
Discretionary Funds from the Office of National Drug Control Policy	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	88.6	113	309	765	242.6	402	621	550	629.5	589.5
Percentage of total	100%	100%	97%	78%	88%	77%	81%	79%	81%	80%
Economic and Social Assistance Programs (millions of dollars)										
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005, estimate	2006, request
Economic Support Funds (ESF)										
Transfers to the recipient government	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Development Assistance (DA)										
Funds for development projects	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Narcotics Control (INC, also known as "Andean Counterdrug Initiative")										
State Department managed training for counter-drug economic and social aid	0	0.5	5.8	208	5.7	120.3	149.2	149.3	152.1	152.2
Subtotal	0	0.5	8.8	212	5.7	120	149	149	152.1	152.2
Percentage of total	0%	0%	3%	22%	2%	23%	19%	21%	15%	20%
Grand Total	88.6	113	318	977	248.3	522	770	699	781.6	741.7

TABLE 3.

OPTIONS FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

There are many alternative strategies that could be pursued by the U.S. in future years. The challenge, however, is to identify those best suited to support the ongoing strengthening of Colombia while enhancing regional stability. Three possible options include the continuation of currently funded programs as scheduled, application of additional resources to current programs, or the constraint of programs through reduced resources.

Current programs are scheduled to continue until 2006. With no changes to current programs and no degradation of Colombian efforts, positive results currently being experienced would most likely continue with slightly improving rates every year. These slight improvements

would likely be the result of the cumulative benefits of infrastructure improvements and the expansion of governance. This option focuses on continued use of military power to achieve stated objectives.

The argument to do more is easily justified due to the significance of U.S. interests in Colombia. U.S. citizens are eager to see the flow of illegal drugs and terrorist activities in Colombia curtailed for obvious reasons. Operational constraints that prevent U.S. personnel from engaging in combat could be relaxed, allowing for more involvement short of combat, thus increasing Colombian capability and effectiveness. The U.S. could allocate more equipment; more helicopters would provide greater freedom for Colombian forces to maneuver as they fight counter-drug and insurgency efforts and greater intelligence collection capability would enhance focus to those operations. Additionally, recognizing that security is more than a military goal, either more funds should be added to support economic development projects or a portion of funds should be diverted to the State Department for application in this area. These increases should be provided with confirmation of improved human rights records, insuring protection of the non-participants of this on-going war.

Conversely, the U.S. could adopt a policy to leave Colombia and its problems for the region to handle, arguing that it is a regional problem and greater regional resources should be committed. This policy would free a relatively low number of personnel but could free up significant amounts of financial aid for redirection. Although an option, it is unsuitable within U.S. policy because of national interests in the region.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend a combination of the three options above. First, the U. S. should continue unwavering support to current programs, increasing the number of personnel and economic aid necessary to effectively execute all programs in place. Secondly, the U. S. should provide more capabilities. For example, there should be a relaxing of current operational constraints to allow U.S. military personnel to move forward from bases. However, the U. S. should not allow any direct combat engagement but should consider the allocation of more helicopters. Additionally, much needed economic aid should be considered to combat the underpinnings of the counter-narcotics problem. Thirdly, the U. S. should move towards aggressive encouragement of support from others in the region, such as Brazil, and also from European countries that are also being significantly impacted by narcotics exportation from Colombia, thus reducing U.S. costs and simultaneously increasing interest for Colombian improvements by others. We must encourage Colombia to increase its own contributions to expanded defense and economic

efforts proportionate to increases in foreign aid. The current tax system in Colombia could be reexamined to allow the wealthy to make greater contributions to the progress which enables their own economic gain.

I make these recommendations for two reasons. First, I believe that with limited aid Colombia is fixing itself, and is possibly a model for addressing other nations with similar problems that present risks to U.S. security policies in the region. Indications are that a long term approach to combating insurgencies is working. Colombia implemented a plan in the year 2000, which is on track. It projects a need to extend it beyond 2006, but foresees the end not far beyond that. Colombians envision an end-state where they provide sovereign control to all spaces inside their borders, security for their citizens, an economic capability for sustaining their nation without illegal trade or terrorist activities. They are developing the flexibility to conduct cooperative cross-border activities, with neighbor relations maturing as a state capable of maintaining itself and in the long term.

Secondly, bi-partisan congressional support to current operations in Colombia exists for three reasons: caps on personnel prevent possible escalations into a possible "Vietnam" scenario; future funding of many programs are contingent on Colombia's ability to improve effective governance inside its borders and progress in deterring illegal drug cultivation; and the unlikelihood of loss of American personnel due to the limitations against U.S. personnel involved in combat operations.²⁸

CONCLUSION

There is a delicate balance that must be struck in future aid packages to Colombia. Should U.S. support efforts in Colombia become more overt, such that we are executing operations as opposed to assisting and advising Colombians, we will be at great risk of reducing Colombian government legitimacy and thereby reducing our ability to extract ourselves as the Colombian government continues to increase its own capability.

Due to the amount of ungoverned space in Colombia and its location in our hemisphere, it is critical that Colombia gain control of its borders and make progress in the war on terrorism. However, we must remember that if the war on drugs is to be won, it must be won in the U.S. first. Drug demand is created in the U.S. and Europe, providing lucrative markets and attractive methods for illegal Colombian organizations to sustain themselves.

Future operations must also provide increasing emphasis on economic independence and security of the Colombian citizen. Until this happens, Colombians will continue to do whatever is necessary and available to maintain livelihood. We must be careful that our policies prioritize

the success of the populace we are supporting before moving to garner success in areas that promote U.S. economic benefit and increased security. Security of the Colombian pipeline and reduction of drug cultivation are prime examples of these types of objectives. Success in these areas might result in collateral benefit to Colombians but will not provide their equal quality of life enhancements, a conundrum aimed squarely at causing our motivations to be continually questioned.

The U.S. model for assistance being applied in Colombia posits an understanding that combating narco-terrorists in ungoverned areas takes time. Whereas the U.S. could provide overwhelming force to immediately address the situation, as it has in other countries, and would be justified in doing so given the national interests at risk, it has not chosen to do so. This model allows the Colombian government to evolve a culture of violence that has developed over many generations into one dependent on effective governance, resulting in Colombian life guided by perdurable internationally accepted values. Simply said, we can do this quick, meaning executing a high tempo operation of short duration; however, it would not be cheap. We can do this cheaply with few forces and funds, but it will not be quick. If we attempt to do this quick and cheap the results will not be good.

On 29 October 2003, General James Hill, the U.S. Southern Command Combatant Commander said to congress, "The center of gravity right now is in Colombia, and the future health of the region hinges upon what happens there. While this is primarily Colombia's fight to win, we have the opportunity to tip the balance by augmenting their efforts decisively with our unwavering support."²⁹ U.S. policy, coupled with unwavering support, will help determine if Colombia is able to fully obtain effective governance within its borders, free of human rights violations, illegal leftist and rightist organizations, and an economy based on narcotics production. The tide is turning in Colombia; now is the time to examine the balance of U.S. strategy in Colombia to enable maximum results.

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⁵ George W. Bush, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America: A Strategy for Today; A Vision for Tomorrow* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2004), 7.

⁶ George W. Bush, *National Strategy For Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2003), 7-8.

⁷ George W. Bush, *National Drug Control Strategy*, (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 2003), 27.

⁸ Ibid., 32-34.

⁹ Joe Napoli, interview by author with COL Napoli, U.S. Army, 30 September 2004, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

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¹⁹ U.S Department of State International Information Programs, "Fact Sheet: Southcom Chief Optimistic about Situation in Colombia," October 2003 ;available from <<http://www.usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2003&m=October&...>>; Internet; accessed 21 September 2004.

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²² U.S Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs; "Fact Sheet: Plan Colombia," 14 March 2004; available from <<http://state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2001/1042pf.htm>>; Internet; accessed 21 September 2004.

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²⁴ Javier Fernandez, interview by author with COL, Colombian Army, 23 February 2005, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

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